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ABSTRACT

While professional women may experience their "dual careers" at home and at work as a source of inner fragmentation, this fragmentation can be a vehicle for developing a greater sense of personhood. Recent data show that women who combine work, marriage, and motherhood are experiencing more general psychological well being than are other women. Some conditions which help to foster the well being of these women include the development of more egalitarian families, changing attitudes about working women, and the woman's own inner experience of personhood. Moving toward wholeness and personhood is a complex and highly individualized process. In facilitating this process with adults in an educational setting, it is important to: (1) help professional and personal learnings to occur in relationship with each other; (2) respond to both male and female qualities of students; and (3) develop nurturant learning atmospheres. The "dual career" issues involved in professional development affect men as well as women. To develop as complete human beings, men have as much to gain by being family members as women do by being professionals. (NB)

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TOWARD PERSONHOOD:
UNITING THE PROFESSIONAL WOMAN'S "DUAL CAREERS"

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TOWARD PERSONHOOD:

UNITING THE PROFESSIONAL WOMAN'S "DUAL CAREERS"

Many professional women experience their "dual careers" at home and at work as a basic source of inner fragmentation. This very fragmentation, however, can also be a vehicle for developing a greater sense of personhood.

The strain of the professional woman's "dual careers" - her career at home as mother or homemaker or daughter or lover, and her career at work as a professional has been well documented.¹ Our work with women's professional life issues in a graduate program, as well as in our own lives, has helped us to gain an important realization: these dual career conflicts can provide the starting place and the fuel to move toward a fuller sense of personhood.

In our professional experience as well as in research findings, we are observing a new stage in the evolution of the professional woman. Recent data show that women between the ages of 35 and 55 who combine work, marriage, and motherhood are experiencing more general psychological well being than other women in their age group. They are able to satisfy their needs for achievement as well as for intimacy. They show less midlife depression and trauma than women used to, and men still do.² Career women with working husbands are experiencing heightened feelings of self-worth, fulfillment, pride, accomplishment, and non-dependency together with the satisfaction of an expanded social network. They are more intellectually involved with their husbands who express "pride in their wives' career accomplishments" and "relief from feelings which accompany total economic responsibility".³ Professional women, who are married and mothers, are successfully living in situations which were burning out the "supermoms" of the 1970s. They are able to work through developmental conflicts that actually help both their home and work lives to flourish.^{4,5}

External and Internal Conditions

There are emerging conditions at home which are fostering this developmental movement forward. Families are changing to become more companionate, developmental, androgynous, and equalitarian.⁶ Accomodating families and supportive husbands are playing crucial roles.⁷ Changing attitudes, values and expectations about working women are reducing the guilt that often results in feeling fragmented.

Perhaps the most influential condition of all has been the inner experience of personhood when a woman begins to discover herself as a solid, worthwhile, whole individual who has "come into her own". Personal reasons, as well as financial ones, are responsible for many women feeling they must return to their professional careers after having a child. What happens when women are unable to resolve conflicts in their dual career families? Not surprisingly, they tend to express little interest in returning to the traditional marriage pattern!⁸ Once the momentum for a new stage of development has begun, it tends to continue despite obstacles.

A woman's career outside the home can serve as an essential catalyst to her development as a more integrated person. A career serves "to create a directing and guiding network of relationships which structures, permits, limits, sets time schedules, reduces options, opens options and in general provides the central social and psychological framework for some 40 or 50 years of the life cycle".⁹

Old Myths, Old Ways

The term "career", however, has usually carried the Calvinist attitude stressing inflexible rigorous routine over interpersonal relationships. This attitude has been perpetuated by male dominated institutions whose basic nature and structure have usually been hierarchical and authoritarian. It is not surprising that these institutions have perpetuated an emphasis on

"work" as separate from everything else in one's life. This separation has often been translated as a division between "professional" and "feminine".

It is almost as if we have all conspired to preserve the myth that the qualities and skills women acquire in their careers-at-home are not applicable in developing their professional careers. Qualities such as responsibility, nurturance, interpersonal sensitivity and social perceptiveness; and executive functions such as simultaneously managing many projects, budgeting family finances, and coordinating school, church, and social organizations are often given little credence as being applicable to professional development, even by the women involved. These less measurable qualities and skills are seen as somehow incompatible with traits such as aggressiveness and rationality which have traditionally been associated with success in the professional world.¹⁰

Moving Forward

National Education Association President Mary Futrell recently reviewed conditions which have prevented the wellspring of insights of women leaders from being adequately tapped.¹¹ But as women move into leadership positions, they hopefully will create conditions where lives at work and lives at home can be more mutually enriching.

Another positive step forward is a quiet new presence of men at the top of the managerial hierarchy whose values and attitudes have undergone a transformation. Many of our male students are examples of these men who have "made it to the top" and have realized, often in retrospect, the personally fragmenting effects of the traditional male dominated climb to power. Programs such as National Training Labs (NTL) have brought many administrators and managers into contact with their underdeveloped emotional qualities which previously seemed "out of place" in their work lives. As they enter into midlife, men are often able "to broaden their perspectives and address, with greater seriousness than ever before, the loving dimensions of their lives".¹²

As their wives become more professionally involved, men's roles expand to include their "non-work" lives.¹³

As we have seen, there are a number of conditions developing at home and at work which seem favorable for an increased sense of wholeness among professional women. Most related literature, however, continues to reflect a fragmented way of thinking about professional women by focusing on their personal lives or their professional lives as if they were separate, competing worlds. In fact, one's career-at-work may well be as "personal" as one's career-at-home; one's career-at-home may well be as "professional" as one's career-at-work.

The important realization is that a personal sense of self or personhood, underlies both one's career-at-home and one's career-at-work. This personhood can be enriched by professional commitment, and as a result, the professional woman can become a more stimulating parent and spouse. But what kinds of educational conditions and principles will actually encourage a professional woman's development as a whole person?

Conditions For Developing Personhood

Moving toward wholeness and personhood is a complex and highly individualized process. In facilitating this process with adults in an educational setting, we have recognized the importance of (1) helping professional and personal learnings to occur in relationship with each other, (2) responding to both male and female qualities of students, (3) developing nurturant learning atmospheres.

First, meaningful professional and personal development do not occur independently. Neglecting either is to deny one's underlying wholeness and to perpetuate conditions for fragmentation. Clearly seeing the congruencies and incongruencies between one's personal and professional beliefs and practices helps one to become more integrated. Successful professional

development involves the fostering of a strong sense of personhood which honors one's whole self and life situation as worth of nurturance. Developing these qualities for success provides a "ground" out of which our personal and professional selves mutually flourish.

Second, responding to both maleness and femaleness in an educational setting optimizes conditions for developing a sense of wholeness in professionals. Harvard professor Carol Gilligan's influential book, In A Different Voice affirms the need for "balance" in the study and practice of human development.¹⁴ Dr. Gilligan documents how our understanding of human development has been largely based on studies of males and the imagery of men's lives. Neglecting the female perspective has not only produced an imbalanced view of human development but it has resulted in understandings of adulthood and career success which are male dominated. Thus, ideas about how personal and professional maturity are successfully achieved has largely been a reflection of traditional male attitudes and perspectives.

Third, this development of the whole person in an educational setting is most likely to occur in an atmosphere of interpersonal recognition, caring, nurturance and expressiveness. Combining various ages, professions, and career stages helps to optimize conditions for professional development. Petty "shop talk" becomes less likely when the common bond in the group has deepened to involve the basic sense of self as well as issues of personal and professional growth. Hearing how others deal with similar basic life issues increases a person's scope of possible life choices. It reduces feelings of aloneness and estrangement and provides a way for determining how one is alike of different from others.

To the authors, the importance of moving toward wholeness, while pursuing careers at home and work, is not an abstraction. As colleagues who also share the parenting of our child, the work of moving toward wholeness is an everyday process at home and work. As we have researched the issues involved in pro-

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fessional development, we have seen ourselves mirrored in the findings.

It has become abundantly clear to us that the "dual career" issues involved in the professional development of women are simply not just women's problems - they are everyone's. Men who successfully climb the career ladder, but who live with children they don't know, or wives with whom they have lost contact -- men who have personal selves they can no longer feel -- men who retire and wonder what point their lives had - these men face profound issues because they did not experience the situations we have discussed here. To develop as complete human beings, men have as much to gain by being family members as women do by being professionals.

Someday we will look back at the latter 1980s as a period when conditions made great developmental strides possible for professional women as a group. Whether these conditions are made use of, however, remains a challenge to each of us individually.

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